
CONSTITUTION of GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul sets forth, 1 Corinthians 14:40, that all things in the church shall be done “in a fitting and orderly way,” and

WHEREAS, the history of the Christian church of all times shows that certain agreements and regulations are helpful properly to fulfill the purpose and attain the objectives of congregations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, a congregation of Evangelical Lutheran Christians at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church do herewith, in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, adopt the following constitution and bylaws.

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 1

Name

The name of this congregation shall be Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kearney, Nebraska.

ARTICLE 2

Articles of Faith

SECTION 1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

This congregation accepts and confesses all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and submits to this Word as the only infallible authority of all matters of faith and life (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

SECTION 2. THE CONFESSIONS

This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of scriptural doctrine. They are:

A. The three ecumenical Creeds

1. The Apostles'
2. The Nicene
3. The Athanasian

B. The Six Lutheran Confessions

1. Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism
2. Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism
3. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession
4. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
5. The Smalcald Articles
6. The Formula of Concord

SECTION 3. SUBSCRIPTION

This congregation accepts and confesses these symbolical books without reservation, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

SECTION 4. DOCTRINE

Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.

SECTION 5. CONTROVERSIES

Likewise, all controversies which may arise in this congregation shall be decided and adjusted according to this norm of doctrine and practice.

ARTICLE 3

Purpose and Objectives

SECTION 1. PURPOSE

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures (Matthew 28:18-20).

SECTION 2. OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of this congregation shall be:

- A. To proclaim the law and gospel, to lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 24:26-48).
- B. To strengthen believers in faith and sanctification through the means of grace (Romans 10:17).
- C. To equip believers as disciples, stewards and witnesses for sharing the gospel of Jesus with our fellow men (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

ARTICLE 4

Synod Affiliation

This congregation shall affiliate itself only with a synod that holds to all the truths of God's Word in doctrine and practice and is bound to the confession of faith as set forth in Article II, if, and as long as, such a synod exists.

ARTICLE 5

Church Membership

SECTION 1. CLASSIFICATION

- A. **Baptized** members of the congregation are those who have been baptized into the Christian faith in the name of the Triune God.
- B. **Communicant** members are those baptized souls who confess the chief parts of Christian doctrine as written in Dr. Luther's Small Catechism and who have declared their adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, without qualification, as the only rule and norm of faith and life.
- C. **Voting** members of the congregation are those male communicant members,

minimum age of 18, who have received a current copy of the church constitution and bylaws and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation. (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12)

SECTION 2. PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

“God is love” (1 John 4:8), and his love ever moves him to bless the members of his church with physical and spiritual gifts (1 John 3:1; James 1:17). In return for all of these undeserved blessings, we ought to love him with all our heart (1 John 4:19) and to show that love with the works that we do. The exercise of such love we acknowledge as both a privilege and a responsibility. Some of the privileges and responsibilities to be noted are the following:

- A. Our God has given us his Word, the one thing needful (Luke 10:42), which alone can save our souls and tell us how to live a God-pleasing life (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Consequently, members of his church will consider it a distinct privilege and a responsibility to:
 - 1) Hear and receive the Word of God diligently.
 - 2) Provide and promote opportunities for Christian education.
 - 3) Bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

- B. Our God has given us two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, which are means that our Lord uses to bring his grace to us. Consequently, members of his church will:
 - 1) Have their children baptized early in life for, “baptism now saves you also” (1 Peter 3:21).
 - 2) Frequently partake of Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), if they are recognized as such who can properly examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28-29). Only those in the confessional fellowship of faith are permitted to commune at our altar. (2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

- C. Our God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being managers over a certain portion of his estate and assures us he will graciously bless such faithful management (2 Corinthians 9:6). Therefore members of his church will under grace:
 - 1) Continually remember that all their possessions, time, and abilities are really a trust from God.
 - 2) Cheerfully decide in their heart (2 Corinthians 9:7) the portion of their possessions, time, and abilities which they will regularly devote to the Lord

for use in carrying out that which the congregation has made its concern (1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Peter 4:10), not omitting the work of the synod (Matthew 28:19-20).

- 3) If eligible, remember the privilege of being a voting member of the congregation and regularly attend the voters' meetings and lend your counsel and aid.

D. Our God has implanted within us who are Christians the new man, who desires to live righteously (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24). Consequently, members of his church will:

- 1) Not live in obvious acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21, 26), but lead a Christian life (Galatians 5:22-25).
- 2) When they have erred, permit themselves to be fraternally admonished and corrected according to Matthew 18:15-20.
- 3) Refuse to hold membership in any organization whose teachings and practices conflict with the Word of God (e.g., lodges, scouting, etc...). (John 5:23; 8:31,32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

SECTION 3. CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND EXCOMMUNICATION.

Christian discipline shall be exercised in this congregation according to Matthew 18:15-20 toward those who err from the faith or who in other ways have given offense. At all times this shall be done in the spirit of the gospel, namely, to regain the erring as brothers or sisters. Those members who become evident as impenitent sinners and finally must be excommunicated, and those who have excluded themselves from the congregation by evading Matthew 18:15-20, lose all their rights in the congregation and in its property. For excommunication a unanimous vote of the voters' assembly is required.

SECTION 4. REINSTATEMENT

When an excommunicated member by the grace of God repents of their sin, they are to be reinstated with all former rights and privileges of this congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

SECTION 5. TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIP

Members who persist in an error that in itself does not make the presence of saving faith impossible shall be excluded from the fellowship of the congregation (Romans 16:17-18) and lose all rights in the congregation and in its property.

ARTICLE 6
Powers and Rights of the Congregation

SECTION 1. SUPREMACY OF THE WORD

In all matters of Christian faith and life the Word of God is supreme (Psalm 119:105)

SECTION 2. RIGHT OF DECISION

In all matters not decided by the Word of God the congregation, represented by the voters' assembly, shall have the right of decision (Romans 12:10; 14:19; Ephesians 5:21).

SECTION 3. AUTHORITY OF CHURCH COUNCIL

The church council, and other boards, committees, or organizations within the congregation, and any of its elected or appointed officers shall have no power or authority beyond that conferred upon them by the congregation. However, the church council in an emergency may act in the name and for the welfare of the congregation. Such action must be submitted for approval at the next voters' meeting.

SECTION 4. SOCIETIES

No group or society may be organized within the congregation without the approval of the congregation. (See Article VI, section 2). The congregation shall be assured that the aims of such a group are in complete harmony with the congregation's aims before approval is granted (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25).

ARTICLE 7
The Ministry

SECTION 1. RIGHT TO CALL

The congregation has the exclusive right to extend calls to pastors, teachers, and staff ministers.

SECTION 2. PASTORS

The pastorate of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such men who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1; Titus 1:6-9; Colossians 4:5-6).

SECTION 3. TEACHERS AND STAFF MINISTERS

The teachers and staff ministers of this congregation shall be conferred only upon such

men and women who are qualified for this ministry and publicly and without reservation profess their acceptance of and adherence to Article II of this Constitution (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

SECTION 4. VACANCIES

In case of a vacancy in one of the called worker positions the congregation shall notify their district president that he may assist in temporarily filling the vacancy and in giving his good counsel in regard to filling the vacant called worker position.

ARTICLE 8

Lay Leaders of the Congregation

SECTION 1. PRECEDENCE FOR CHOOSING LAY LEADERS

The first New Testament congregation at Jerusalem chose men “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:1-6) to aid the apostles in the administration of its affairs. This congregation shall choose church council members, board members, and committee members with like qualifications to aid the called workers in administering its affairs (1 Timothy 3:8-13, Romans 16:1-5, 6, 12-13).

SECTION 2. LISTING IN THE BYLAWS

The church council, board, and committee structure and duties are outlined in the bylaws.

SECTION 3. CONDUCT AND RESPECT

Those serving as lay leaders shall be given the respect and esteem of the congregation in the performance of their duties, and they shall be given its cooperation. The lay leaders shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting their responsibilities (1 Timothy 3:8-13, 1 Corinthians 15:58).

ARTICLE 9

Removal from Service

SECTION 1. RESPONSIBILITY OF CONGREGATION

If anyone who holds a called, elected, or appointed position in the congregation willfully neglects their duty and upon due admonition does not amend, the congregation has the right and eventually the duty to remove them from that position and choose a suitable replacement (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

SECTION 2. CAUSES FOR REMOVAL OF CALLED WORKER

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a called worker are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty or established inability to perform the duties of their office (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). In such a case the advice and good counsel of the appropriate district officer shall be sought.

SECTION 3. CAUSES FOR REMOVAL OF LAY LEADER

Sufficient and urgent causes for removing a person elected, appointed, and installed into a position within the congregation (church council, board, committee, Sunday School, etc...) are persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of duty or established inability to perform the duties of their position.

ARTICLE 10

Meetings of the Congregation

Meetings of this congregation shall be held at such times and in such manner as stated in the Bylaws. The meetings shall give the voters of this congregation the opportunity to hear, discuss and take necessary action in matters pertaining to the welfare of this congregation and of the church-at-large.

ARTICLE 11

Separation or Dissolution

SECTION 1. SEPARATION

If at any time a separation should occur in this congregation--may God graciously prevent it--the property and all equipment of this congregation shall remain with that portion of the membership which adheres to this Constitution, regardless of number.

SECTION 2. DISSOLUTION

In the event of termination or dissolution of the congregation, the church council shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the congregation, dispose of its remaining assets, if any, exclusively for the purposes of the congregation, by distributing, at the direction of the voters' assembly, the remaining assets to (and only to) one or more organizations with which the congregation is in fellowship, which shall at the time qualify as exempt organization(s) (under section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Code).

ARTICLE 12
Repeals and Alterations

SECTION 1. UNALTERABLE ARTICLES*

Articles 2 through 5, Articles 6:1, 6:2, and 6:4, Article 7:1-3, Article 9, Article 11, and Article 12:1 of this Constitution shall be and remain unalterable and irrevocable, in as much as they express clear, scriptural teachings.

SECTION 2. PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES

Proposals to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the church council, and shall be publicly announced on at least the two Sundays immediately preceding a regular business meeting of the voters' assembly and posted in the church during that period.

SECTION 3. PROCEDURE

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the voters' assembly.

SECTION 4. TWO-THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED

A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any article of this Constitution or to add an article hereto.

***UNALTERABLE AND IRREPEALABLE**

While wording in these articles or sections may be tweaked to make them more readable and understandable, the articles, sections and their original meaning or intent shall not be changed or removed from this constitution (cf. Article 12, section 1 "Repeals and Alterations").

BYLAWS of GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

ARTICLE 1

Meetings of the Congregation

SECTION 1. VOTERS' ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

A regular meeting of the congregation's voters shall be held a minimum of three times per year. The Voters' Assembly may meet more than three times a year if it so desires or if it becomes necessary.

SECTION 2. DATE, TIME, PLACE

The church council shall set the exact date, time and place of the Voters' Assembly meetings, unless otherwise specified by the congregation. Announcements of the meetings shall be given in print and/or orally on at least the two Sundays prior to the time of the meeting.

SECTION 3. SPECIAL MEETINGS

Special meetings of the congregation may be called by the church council, or the pastor, or upon written request of three voting members. Such meetings must be announced, according to the general rule set forth in Section 2, with the purpose clearly stated.

SECTION 4. ANNUAL VOTERS' ASSEMBLY MEETING

The January meeting shall be designated as the annual Voters' Assembly meeting.

SECTION 5. ANNUAL ELECTION & BUDGET ADOPTION MEETING

The annual election and budget adoption meeting shall be the January Voters' Assembly meeting.

SECTION 6. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Congregational President, in consultation with the pastor and other church council members, shall set the agenda for the Church Council meetings. The Church Council shall set the agenda for the Voters' Assembly meetings. A good guideline to follow for those meetings can be found below.

- D. Opening with a devotion and/or prayer.
- E. Roll call.

- F. Reading and approval of minutes of prior regular and special meetings.
- G. Reception of new members, transfer, release or removal from membership.
- H. Pastor's report.
- I. Reports of officers and standing committees and action thereon.
- J. Unfinished business.
- K. Recommendations of the church council and new business.
- L. Elections.
- M. Adjournment with a devotion and/or the Lord's Prayer in unison or some other prayer.

SECTION 8. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

The meetings shall be conducted according to good, Christian order. *Robert's Rules of Order* may be followed for parliamentary procedure.

SECTION 9. COMPLAINTS

No one shall bring to any meeting a charge or complaint against any member, or called worker, unless he/she has first admonished him/her privately in a Christian manner according to *Matthew 18:15-20*.

SECTION 10. RIGHT TO VOTE

Voting members of the congregation are those male communicant members, minimum age of 18, who have received a current copy of the church constitution and bylaws and who have been accepted by the voters' assembly of the congregation. (1 *Corinthians 14:34*; 1 *Timothy 2:12*) Only voting members present at the meeting shall have the right to vote.

ARTICLE 2

Quorum

The voting members present at a properly announced meeting of the congregation shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE 3

The Church Council

SECTION 1. STRUCTURE

The current structure of the Church Council can be found as part of the addendum entitled "Congregational Structure." The current structure of the Church Council shall be followed until the Voters' Assembly deems it necessary to revise it. All revisions must be

approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voters' Assembly present at that particular Voters' Assembly meeting.

SECTION 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The members of the church council shall adorn their high office with an honest way of life and be good examples to the congregation (*1 Timothy 3:8-12*). The members of the church council shall aid the pastor in the spiritual affairs of the congregation. They shall be accountable for good order in the services. They shall particularly care in love for their fellow members who have special needs (*Galatians 6:9-10*). The members of the church council shall consult together concerning the total spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation giving due attention also to the work of the Lord in the church-at-large. The church council shall implement resolutions of the voters' assembly and carry out such assignments as are directed to them by the voters' assembly.
- 2.2 The church council, acting as a board of trustees, shall control the corporate property of the congregation according to the direction given to it by the voters' assembly. The church council is hereby empowered to borrow money, pledge the assets of the congregation, sell, lease or otherwise dispose of the real and personal property of the congregation, all at the direction of the voters' assembly. It shall also have the right to acquire property by purchase, trade, gift or devise as directed by the voters' assembly. The president and secretary of the congregation are hereby designated as the persons who shall sign all documents of the congregation.

SECTION 3. TERMS OF OFFICE

The terms of office for the members of the Church Council can be found as part of the addendum entitled "Guidelines and Expectations for Church Council, Boards, and Committees in current Congregational Structure." These current terms of office for the Church Council shall be followed until the Voters' Assembly deems it necessary to revise them. All revisions must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voters' Assembly present at that particular Voters' Assembly meeting.

SECTION 4. INSTALLATION

As soon as possible after being elected at the annual Voters' Assembly meeting, the new members of the church council shall be installed in office at a regular service and shall thus be presented to the congregation.

SECTION 5. MEETINGS

The church council shall meet a minimum of six times a year. It may meet more than that if it so desires or deems it necessary. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the president. The church council shall not convene to transact business without the

knowledge of the pastor. A majority of the members of the council shall constitute a quorum.

SECTION 6. VACANCIES

If a vacancy should occur on the church council, follow the current practices found in the addendum entitled “Guidelines and Expectations for Church Council, Boards, and Committees in current Congregational Structure.”

ARTICLE 4

Congregational Boards and/or Committees

SECTION 1. STRUCTURE

The current structure of the congregational boards and/or committees can be found as part of the addendum entitled “Congregational Structure.” The current structure of the congregational boards and/or committees shall be followed until the Voters’ Assembly deems it necessary to revise it. All revisions must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voters’ Assembly present at that particular meeting.

SECTION 2. INSTALLATION

As soon as possible after being elected or appointed, the new members of the congregational boards and/or committees shall be installed in office at a regular service and shall thus be presented to the congregation.

SECTION 3. TERMS OF OFFICE

The terms of office for the members of the congregational boards and/or committees can be found as part of the addendum entitled “Guidelines and Expectations for Church Council, Boards, and Committees in current Congregational Structure.” These current terms of office for the congregational boards and/or committees shall be followed until the Voters’ Assembly deems it necessary to revise them. All revisions must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the Voters’ Assembly present at that particular meeting.

SECTION 4. MEETINGS

The congregational boards and/or committees shall meet in accordance with the addendum entitled “Congregational Structure.” No board and/or committee shall convene to transact business without the knowledge of the pastor or the chairman of that committee.

SECTION 5. VACANCIES

If a vacancy should occur on a board and/or committee, follow the practices found in the

addendum entitled “Guidelines and Expectations for Church Council, Boards, and Committees in current Congregational Structure.”

ARTICLE 5

Duties of Church Council, Boards and/or Committee Members

The duties of the Church Council, Boards, and/or Committee members shall follow the current congregational structure as outlined in the addendum entitled “Congregational Structure.”

ARTICLE 6

Nomination & Election of Members to the Church Council, Boards and/or Committees

The current nomination and election practices can be found in the addendum entitled “Guidelines and Expectations for Church Council, Boards, and Committees in current Congregational Structure.”

ARTICLE 7

Reception into Membership

SECTION 1. PROCEDURE

Persons who wish to be received into membership in this congregation other than through the sacrament of holy baptism or rite of confirmation shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council. The council shall honor the request when accompanied by a letter of transfer (or other recommendation) from a sister congregation or when qualifications for membership, as specified in Article 5 of this constitution have been met. Such action of the council shall be ratified by the regular meeting of the voters’ assembly, and notice of such receptions reported to the congregation.

SECTION 2. TERMS

Since reception into membership signifies acceptance of and submission to this Constitution and Bylaws, each family shall be given a copy of the current Constitution and Bylaws so that they may become familiar with them.

ARTICLE 8

Transfer or Release from Membership

SECTION 1. PROCEDURE

Those desiring a transfer or release from membership shall bring their request to the attention of the pastor or the church council for action to be ratified at the next meeting of the voters' assembly.

SECTION 2. TERMS

Transfer of membership shall apply only to those who desire membership in a congregation which is in confessional fellowship with this one. Release from membership shall apply when affiliation is sought with those denominations not in confessional fellowship with our congregation.

SECTION 3. REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

Members who have moved away and do not participate in any way in the congregation's work for at least a year may be removed from the membership list but this only after the persons in question have stated that they no longer desire membership or transfer to another church in our fellowship, or after an unsuccessful attempt has been made to communicate with them and get their answer. Removal from membership might also be necessary in the case of the member who has moved away, but says they want to remain a member even though by their actions show they have no intention to resume active membership.

Finally, it might be necessary to remove from membership a person who refuses to repent and change a publicly sinful lifestyle even after the pastor and elders in Christian love have followed the directions of Scripture and our Church Constitution (Article 5, section 3).

SECTION 4. RIGHTS RELINQUISHED

Members released, removed, or transferred relinquish all rights in this congregation.

ARTICLE 9

Repeals and Alterations

SECTION 1. PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES

Proposals to alter or repeal any article of these Bylaws or to add an article shall be submitted in writing to the church council, and shall be publicly announced on at least the two Sundays immediately preceding a regular business meeting of the voters' assembly and posted in the church during that period.

SECTION 2. PROCEDURE

Such a proposal shall be discussed in the meeting in which it is presented and voted on in the next regular meeting of the voters' assembly.

SECTION 3. TWO-THIRDS VOTE REQUIRED

A two-thirds vote of the voting members present shall be required to alter or repeal any article of these Bylaws or to add an article hereto.

ARTICLE 10

Marriage and Human Sexuality

SECTION 1. INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

God instituted marriage at creation (Genesis 1:28; 2:22-24). God defines marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:22-24; Matthew 19:4-6). God's institution of marriage is valid for all time (Matthew 19:6).

SECTION 2. SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Sexual relations are to be exercised solely within marriage between one man and one woman. All other sexual relationships are contrary to God's will (Leviticus 18:22-23; 20:10-17, 19, 20; Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10).

SECTION 3. WEDDING POLICY

The wedding policy of Good Shepherd shall follow the policies as outlined in the addendum entitled "Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church Wedding Policies."

Revised – January 18, 2015

ENDNOTE

The Constitution and Bylaws are not intended to motivate but to regulate. Only the gospel can motivate Christians to faithfully serve the Lord. The Constitution covers basic principles and the Bylaws organizational details. These are meant for all members of the congregation.